Officer Involved Shooting of Thomas Dallaire Redondo Beach Police Department

Officer Gregory Wiist, #1293 J.S.I.D. File #16-0624



JACKIE LACEY District Attorney Justice System Integrity Division January 3, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: CHIEF KEITH KAUFFMAN

Redondo Beach Police Department

401 Diamond Street

Redondo Beach, California 90277

CAPTAIN WILLIAM P. HAYES Los Angeles Police Department Robbery-Homicide Division 100 W. First Street, 5th Floor Los Angeles, California 90012

FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: Officer Involved Shooting of Thomas Dallaire

J.S.I.D. File #16-0624 R.B.P.D. File #16-7073 L.A.P.D. File #16-05-20027

DATE: January 3, 2018

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the December 10, 2016, non-fatal shooting of Thomas Dallaire by Redondo Beach Police Department (RBPD) Officer Gregory Wiist. We have concluded that Officer Wiist acted lawfully in self-defense and the defense of others.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of the shooting at 8:55 p.m. on December 10, 2016. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the location. They were given a briefing regarding the circumstances surrounding the shooting and a walk-through of the scene.

The following analysis is based on investigative reports, firearms analysis reports, photographic evidence and witness statements submitted to this office by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Robbery-Homicide Division (RHD) Detectives Luis Romero and Grace Thornton. The voluntary statement of Officer Wiist was considered in this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On December 10, 2016, at approximately 5:20 p.m., RBPD Sergeant Alan Beck and Officer Matthew Alston were working patrol in the City of Redondo Beach.¹ They observed a dark green Ford F-350 XLT four door pick-up truck, directly in front of them, driving north on Catalina

¹ Alston was driving the black and white patrol vehicle. Beck was the front passenger.

Avenue.² The driver, later identified as Thomas Dallaire, was not wearing his seat belt and the registration tags on the rear license plate were expired.³ When the vehicle entered the left westbound turn lane on Catalina Avenue and Esplanade Street, Alston pulled behind the truck and activated the overhead lights of the patrol car. The truck turned left and continued west and then southbound on Esplanade Street, and went through the stop sign at Ruby Street. Alston utilized the public address (PA) system and announced, "Pull to the right." Dallaire ignored the command and continued southbound on Esplanade Street, approaching Sapphire Street. Once again, Alston announced over the PA, "Driver, pull to the right." Dallaire again ignored the command and turned left on Sapphire Street without stopping at the stop sign. This began an 18-mile pursuit that lasted approximately 22 minutes, during which Dallaire repeatedly failed to stop at stop signs and red lights, drove at speeds of up to 55 miles per hour (mph) in 35 mph zones and drove over center medians and into oncoming traffic on the wrong side of the street.

Additional units joined the pursuit. One of these units was a marked patrol vehicle driven by RBPD Officer Gregory Wiist. RBPD Cadet Garrett Badrena was in the front passenger seat. Wiist's unit was positioned as the secondary vehicle in the pursuit and took over broadcasting the directions of travel. At one point, when Dallaire drove his truck over the center median onto the wrong side of the street, Alston drove over the median, following him. When Dallaire drove back over the median onto the correct side of the street, Wiist followed behind him, now positioned as the first vehicle behind Dallaire's truck.

Dallaire drove his truck at a high rate of speed southbound on Gaffey Street, into the intersection of Gaffey Street and Summerland Avenue. V was stopped, facing northbound in the left lane of Gaffey Street, waiting to make a left turn onto Summerland Avenue. Dallaire's truck collided with P v vehicle head-on. 5

At the time of the collision, Wiist's vehicle had not yet entered the intersection. Wiist stopped the patrol vehicle approximately three car lengths behind Dallaire's truck. Badrena handed Wiist the patrol AR-15 rifle and Wiist exited the vehicle. While positioned behind the police vehicle's open driver's side door for a felony stop, Wiist suddenly observed the wheels of the truck spinning and he saw the reverse lights illuminated. Wiist ordered Dallaire to stop and put his hands up. Dallaire refused to comply with the commands and continued driving his truck in reverse at a high rate of speed toward Wiist's vehicle. Wiist believed that Dallaire was intentionally trying to hit the patrol vehicle and the officers. Wiist was in fear for his personal safety, as well as the safety of his partner, Badrena, and Patter. Wiist shot five rounds from the rifle into the back of the truck.

The truck hit the front right bumper of the police vehicle, causing damage.⁷ Alston, who had arrived at the scene immediately after Wiist, saw the impending assault on Wiist and drove his police vehicle toward the truck as it was reversing, and struck the right rear of the truck with the

² The license plate number showed the truck registered to Thomas Dallaire, however, subsequent investigation revealed the truck to be stolen with switched plates.

³ Beck observed the seat belt hanging inside the left driver's side compartment.

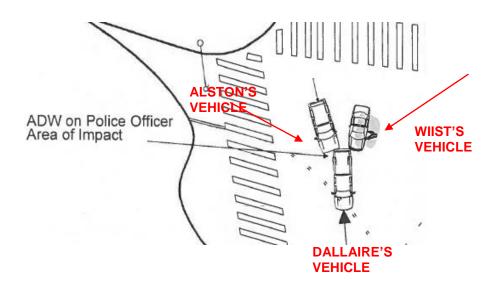
⁴ This intersection is located in the City of Los Angeles, therefore LAPD RHD handled the criminal investigation. California Highway Patrol handled the traffic collision investigation.

⁵ P was driving a 1999 Honda Accord. P sustained an injury to her knee during the collision.

⁶ Badrena remained inside the patrol vehicle. P was inside her vehicle, in the intersection.

⁷ It is unclear whether the shots were fired before, simultaneous to, or after the truck actually impacted the police vehicle.

patrol vehicle's push bar, in an effort to reduce the speed and impact of the truck hitting Wiist's vehicle. Alston's vehicle sustained damage to the left front bumper.⁸



LAPD traffic investigation diagram showing points of impact between the rear of the truck and the police vehicles

Dallaire placed the truck in "drive" and sped away. Alston followed as the primary unit, and Wiist was positioned as the secondary unit. Dallaire continued south on Gaffey Street, failing to stop at red lights and stop signs, and driving at times on the wrong side of the street. Dallaire finally stopped his truck approximately 40 feet east of Leland Street and put his hands out of the driver's side window. Officers waited to extract Dallaire from his vehicle until more police units arrived on scene. Beck used the PA system and gave commands for Dallaire to exit the vehicle. Dallaire complied and followed directions to walk backwards with his hands in the air.

Dallaire was handcuffed and transported to Harbor General Hospital for medical treatment. Medical records revealed he was treated for a gunshot wound to the back upper left shoulder area and discharged from the hospital on December 12, 2016.¹⁰

LAPD officers who arrived at the scene of the arrest discovered methamphetamine in a small clear plastic bag on the floorboard next to the left side of the driver's seat. While searching Dallaire at the scene, officers recovered from his pocket a clear glass pipe with an off white residue, resembling methamphetamine. The pipe and narcotics were booked into evidence by LAPD.

_

⁸ Alston was driving a RBPD marked black and white sports utility vehicle (SUV).

⁹ LAPD officers began to arrive at the location.

¹⁰Dallaire arrived to the hospital in stable condition with no other injuries. On December 13, 2016, Dallaire was charged in criminal case number YA095328 with five felony counts including assault on a police officer, assault with a deadly weapon, fleeing a pursuing officer while driving recklessly, theft of a vehicle and hit and run. The case is set for trial in Torrance Superior court in January 2018.

Five expended .223 shell casings were recovered from the street, at the intersection of Gaffey Street and Summerland Avenue. Forensic analysis revealed these casings were consistent with Wiist having shot five rounds from the AR-15 patrol rifle.



Photo of the stolen pickup truck at the conclusion of the pursuit



Photo of the rear window of the pickup truck showing bullet holes

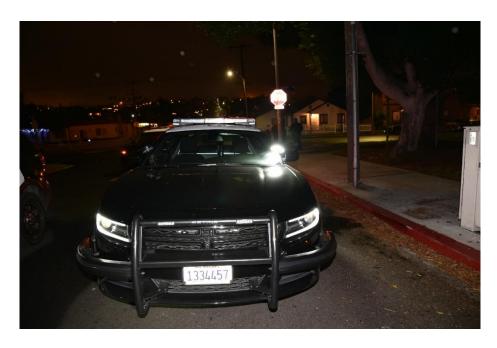


Photo of Wiist's patrol vehicle



Photo of the right front bumper of Wiist's patrol vehicle showing damage inflicted by Dallaire's pickup truck



Photo of P s vehicle after the collision with Dallaire at Gaffey Street and Summerland Avenue

CIVILIAN WITNESS STATEMENTS¹¹

<u>V</u> P

On December 10, 2016, at approximately 9:20 p.m., P was interviewed at the collision scene. P told detectives she was stopped at the intersection of Gaffey Street and Summerland Avenue, waiting to make a left turn onto Summerland Avenue. She heard police sirens and then a "dark blue SUV" collided with her vehicle head-on. The driver then drove the vehicle in reverse and P heard three pops. After she heard the popping sounds, the vehicle sped off southbound on Gaffey Street. P saw police vehicles going after the suspect. P never saw the driver. P suffered a bruise to her left knee and soreness in her back.

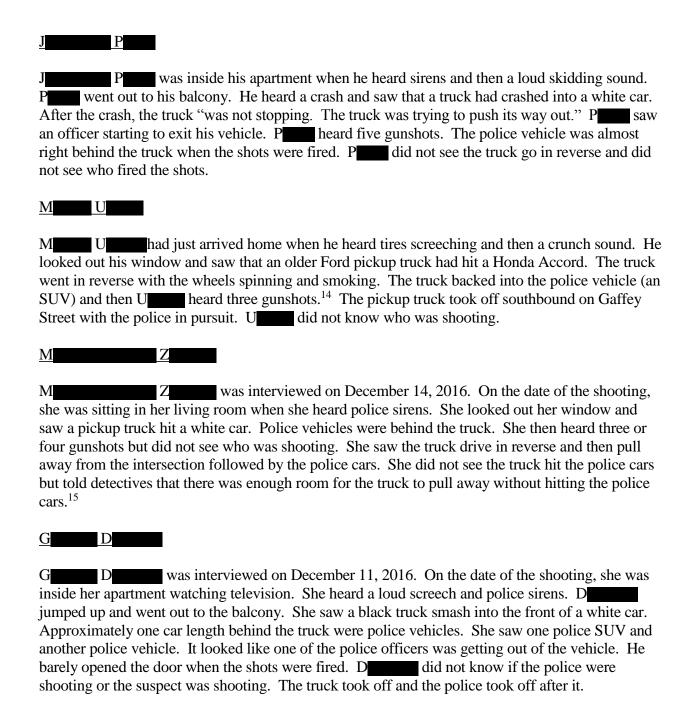
<u>A</u> G

A was inside his residence when he heard the sound of a vehicle braking. G saw that the vehicle was an "old Ford pickup truck" and it had collided with a white sedan. G saw two police cars right behind the pickup truck. G saw the driver put the truck in reverse and accelerate. G then heard three gunshots. G clarified that he heard the shots after the truck went in reverse and accelerated.

¹¹ LAPD Detectives Romero and Thornton attempted to record all interviews. However, due to a recording malfunction, some of the interviews were not memorialized on tape. Both detectives provided their contemporaneous handwritten notes to supplement the typed reports. No inconsistencies were observed between the notes and the reports.

¹² P 's description of Dallaire's vehicle is inaccurate.

¹³ In a subsequent interview later that night, P stated that she heard several gunshots and then saw the vehicle driving in reverse. When asked to clarify the order of events, P was unsure, but stated that her memory was better when she was first interviewed.



THOMAS DALLAIRE'S STATEMENTS

While being transported to the hospital, Dallaire told RBPD Officer Ryan Brown that he was on his way to see his girlfriend when the police tried to pull him over. Dallaire said he fled because he thought the truck was hot (street vernacular for stolen or being involved in a crime). Dallaire told Brown that he fled because he just did five years in state prison and did not want to go back.

¹⁴ As stated earlier, the police SUV was driven by Alston. It is unclear whether U saw the truck impact Wiist's police vehicle.

¹⁵ Z sobservation is inconsistent with police officers' and other civilian witnesses' accounts that Dallaire reversed the truck and drove toward the officers prior to the shooting.

On December 11, 2016, while Dallaire was in the hospital, detectives Mirandized him and obtained a statement. Dallaire stated he purchased the pickup truck from a friend and the license plates belonged to his son. Dallaire stated he only had the truck for a couple of days. He then asked for an attorney. Dallaire then stated that he was shot because he was dating Officer Wiist's girlfriend, A

OFFICERS' STATEMENTS¹⁸

Officer Gregory Wiist

Officer Wiist was in uniform, working patrol, and had Cadet Badrena riding with him at the time of the incident. At approximately 5:20 p.m., Wiist and Badrena responded to a failure to yield pursuit that was being broadcasted. He joined the pursuit in the City of Carson and became the secondary unit. For a period of time during the pursuit, Wiist briefly broadcasted the pursuit. When the suspect, later identified as Dallaire, drove over the median into oncoming traffic, the primary unit followed him. When Dallaire drove back over the median and continued fleeing, Wiist became the primary unit in the pursuit. Wiist observed Dallaire committing numerous traffic violations, including driving against traffic several times.

Wiist remained as the primary unit until Dallaire collided with another vehicle. When the collision occurred, Wiist had not yet entered the intersection. After the collision, Wiist set up for a felony stop. Wiist was approximately three car lengths behind the pickup truck after the collision. There was enough room between the pickup truck and Wiist's police vehicle for Dallaire to move and continue fleeing.

Wiist asked Badrena to hand him the rifle that was kept in the patrol vehicle. Wiist exited the vehicle with the rifle. As he was looking over his driver's side doorjamb, he saw the truck's tires spinning and squealing and Dallaire kept "ramming" the other vehicle (Honda Accord). Wiist was concerned for the driver of the other vehicle. He brought the rifle up and looked down the barrel toward the truck. Suddenly, he saw the reverse lights of the truck illuminate.

Wiist observed the wheels of the pickup truck spinning and he saw reverse lights as the pickup truck drove in reverse at a high rate of speed toward him. Wiist again heard the sound of squealing wheels. Wiist was in fear for his personal safety, as well as the safety of Badrena and the traffic collision victim. Wiist told detectives that Dallaire was coming directly toward him. He stated, "There is no doubt in my mind that he was coming directly for me and he was going to go right into

¹⁶ It is unclear whether Dallaire is referring to his son, or the son of the friend who sold him the truck.

¹⁷ Further investigation revealed that A is a friend of Dallaire's girlfriend, J Dallaire told investigators that he previously had a sexual relationship with A and that he was aware that Wiist had a relationship with A told detectives that Wiist had previously arrested her and they subsequently had two sexual encounters. A denied having any relationship with Dallaire, stating that she hated him. Wiist told detectives that he had socialized with A in the past. Detectives discovered that on the night of the shooting, Wiist's name was mentioned by Sergeant Alan Beck, within earshot of Dallaire, as the officer involved in the shooting. There is no evidence that Wiist had ever met Dallaire in the past, or had information that Dallaire was driving the stolen truck at the time of the shooting.

¹⁸ The details provided by the officers of the 18-mile pursuit, including specific directions of travel and numerous traffic violations are not germane to this review, and are therefore omitted from this memorandum.

us. . . and then . . . once he hit us, the only thing I'm thinking, okay, is he going to ram this other car again?"

The pickup truck rammed the front part of his police vehicle causing damage. Wiist was unsure whether he shot prior to or after the pickup truck rammed the front of his vehicle. Wiist told investigators, "In my head, I'm thinking no, no, no, no, no, no, please. And before I could do anything, I fired three rounds, or what I believed to be three rounds, at least, to the back of where I believe the driver was." Wiist had aimed for the headrest. Wiist could not see where the other officers were located because his primary focus was on the barrel of his rifle.

Wiist did not see Dallaire until the termination of the pursuit. Wiist had never seen Dallaire prior to the pursuit, nor did he ever have any contact with him. Wiist did not speak with Dallaire at the termination of the pursuit.

Wiist told detectives that he knows A and A and and has socialized with her before. He was unaware that Dallaire and A knew each other.

Cadet Garrett Badrena

At the time of the incident, Cadet Badrena was on a "ride-along" with Wiist. They responded to Alston's request for back-up for a vehicle pursuit. They became the primary unit at Sepulveda Boulevard and Crenshaw Boulevard. They continued pursuing Dallaire's vehicle until it collided with another vehicle head-on at Gaffey Street and Summerland Avenue. Dallaire had stopped his truck and Wiist stopped behind him. As Wiist exited the police vehicle, Badrena handed Wiist the AR-15 rifle. Wiist was standing outside the police vehicle, behind the driver's side door and Badrena remained inside the vehicle. Wiist ordered Dallaire to stop and put his hands up. Dallaire refused to comply and drove his truck in reverse. It looked like Dallaire was trying to hit them. Wiist shot at the truck as Dallaire drove his pick-up in reverse toward them and into their police vehicle. Badrena told detectives he was in fear for his life when Dallaire drove the truck toward them and hit the front bumper guard of the police vehicle.

After the shots were fired, Dallaire drove away from the intersection, southbound on Gaffey Street. Wiist got back into the police vehicle and continued to pursue Dallaire as the secondary unit. Dallaire came to a stop at 17th Street and Leland Avenue. At that point, Dallaire placed his hands outside of the window. Dallaire was ordered out of the truck and taken into custody without further incident.

Officer Matthew Alston

Officer Alston was working in full uniform, assigned to a patrol unit with Sergeant Beck. Alston was the driver and Beck was the passenger officer in a marked black and white SUV. At approximately 5:20 p.m., Alston observed Dallaire committing traffic violations. He attempted to conduct a traffic stop, but Dallaire failed to yield and led the officers in a vehicle pursuit. Alston and Beck were the primary unit in the vehicle pursuit and during the course of the pursuit, they observed numerous traffic violations. When Dallaire started to drive on the wrong side of the street, Wiist took over and became the primary officer in the pursuit with Alston's unit becoming secondary.

After Dallaire collided with another vehicle, Alston thought they were setting up for a felony stop. Alston saw Dallaire drive his truck in reverse toward Wiist's vehicle. Alston then utilized a pursuit intervention technique called "ramming" to stop Dallaire's vehicle from colliding with Wiist's police vehicle. Alston drove his police vehicle (SUV) forward, striking the right rear section of Dallaire's vehicle with the SUV's front push bar. Alston then heard shots. He then observed the truck's wheels spinning and saw that Dallaire had put the truck in "drive" and fled from the scene. Alston and Beck became the primary unit in the vehicle pursuit and Wiist became the secondary unit.

Alston saw that the truck's left front tire was blown out. Dallaire came to a stop at 17th Street and Leland Street. Dallaire put his hands out of the window and said something unintelligible.¹⁹ Beck ordered Dallaire out of the vehicle. Dallaire complied and was taken into custody.

Sergeant Alan Beck

Sergeant Beck was assigned to patrol with Officer Alston. They had just left the scene of an unrelated traffic collision when they drove behind Dallaire's pickup truck. They observed that Dallaire was not wearing his seatbelt and the registration tags on the vehicle were expired. Alston ordered Dallaire to pull over, but Dallaire ignored the order and a pursuit ensued, during which Dallaire committed numerous traffic violations.

At one point, Wiist's unit became the primary unit in the pursuit. When the traffic collision occurred, Beck saw dust clouds in the air. Alston drove his patrol vehicle up to the right side of Wiist's patrol vehicle. Beck believed they were setting up for a felony stop. Both Beck and Alston saw the pickup truck backing up. Alston rammed the pickup truck with the police vehicle. As soon as they rammed the pickup truck, Beck heard "pop, pop, pop" sounds. Beck did not see the shooting. Alston drove their patrol vehicle out of the line of fire.

After the shots were fired, Beck saw the truck's wheels spinning and the truck fled. The truck came to a stop at 17th Street and Leland Street. Dallaire stuck his head and hands out of the window, saying something inaudible. Beck could not hear Dallaire because of the helicopter overhead, but believed that he might have said he had been shot. When Dallaire exited the truck, Beck observed a gunshot wound to Dallaire's left shoulder. Dallaire was taken into custody.

Beck originally thought the shooting officer was Officer Bryan Ridenour. When Beck approached Ridenour to begin the process of obtaining a public safety statement, Ridenour said, "It wasn't me. It was Officer Wiist." This statement was made within earshot of Dallaire.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

California law permits the use of deadly force in self-defense or in the defense of others if it reasonably appears to the person claiming the right of self-defense or the defense of others that he or others were in imminent danger of great bodily injury or death. Penal Code § 197; *People v. Randle* (2005) 35 Cal.4th 987, 994 (overruled on another ground in *People v. Chun* (2009) 45 Cal.4th 1172, 1201); *People v. Humphrey* (1996) 13 Cal.4th 1073, 1082; *see also*, CALCRIM No. 505.

¹⁹ Alston could not hear Dallaire because a police helicopter was hovering above.

The right of self-defense is the same whether the danger is real or apparent. If a person acted from reasonable and honest convictions, he cannot be held criminally responsible for a mistake in the actual extent of the danger, when other reasonable men would alike have been mistaken. *People v. Jackson* (1965) 233 Cal.App.2d 639. In protecting himself or another, a person may use all force which he believes reasonably necessary and which would appear to a reasonable person, in the same or similar circumstances, to be necessary to prevent the injury which appears to be imminent. See also, CALCRIM No. 3470.

The "reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police are often forced to make split-second judgments – in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving – about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation." The reasonableness of the force used "requires careful attention to the facts and circumstances" of the particular incident. *Graham v. Connor* (1989) 490 U.S. 386, 396-397. "[T]hus, under *Graham*, we must avoid substituting our personal notions of proper police procedure for the instantaneous decision of the officer at the scene. We must never allow the theoretical, sanitized world of our imagination to replace the dangerous and complex world that policemen face every day. What constitutes 'reasonable' action may seem quite different to someone facing a possible assailant than to someone analyzing the question at leisure." *Smith v. Freland* (6th Cir. 1992) 954 F.2d 343, 347.

The United States Supreme Court has recognized the significant danger posed by drivers fleeing from police. In *Plumhoff v. Rikard* (2014) 134 S.Ct. 2012; 2014 U.S. LEXIS 3816, the Court determined that police officers acted reasonably in firing fifteen shots at a fleeing driver, resulting in his death, because during the span when the shots were fired, the driver never abandoned his attempt to flee.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The evidence examined in this investigation shows that Thomas Dallaire led police on an 18-mile pursuit from the City of Redondo Beach into the City of Los Angeles, traveling at high rates of speed, running through stop lights and stop signs and driving on the wrong side of the street against traffic. When he collided with P 's vehicle at the intersection of Gaffey Street and Summerland Avenue, Dallaire used his vehicle as a potentially deadly means of escaping capture. He continued to drive forward into P 's vehicle. He then put the vehicle in reverse and backed up rapidly toward Officer Wiist, who was standing at the open driver's side door of his patrol vehicle.

Despite the efforts of Officer Alston to minimize the impact to Wiist by ramming Dallaire's truck with the police SUV, Dallaire hit Wiist's vehicle. As Dallaire was backing the truck toward police officers, Wiist shot five rounds from the police rifle in an effort to stop the deadly threat that Dallaire posed to him, Cadet Badrena and Page. Despite being shot in the shoulder, Dallaire continued his dangerous efforts to escape arrest and fled the scene, causing the pursuit to continue.

_

²⁰The fleeing driver in *Plumhoff* led officers on a high-speed car chase that came to a temporary halt when the driver spun out in a parking lot. He accelerated his vehicle even though his bumper was flush against a patrol car. The officer initially fired three shots into the car. The driver drove away, almost hitting an officer. Officers then fired twelve more shots at the vehicle, striking the driver and his passenger, resulting in a car crash. Both occupants died from the combination of gunshot wounds and injuries suffered from the crash.

Dallaire was determined to evade capture because he did not want to go back to prison. Officer Wiist shot at Dallaire because he was in fear for his safety and the safety of others. Dallaire's actions posed a serious and immediate risk of serious injury or death to Wiist, Badrena and Plus, thus Wiist acted reasonably when he fired shots at Dallaire to end the threat.

After a thorough analysis, we conclude that Officer Wiist acted lawfully in self-defense and the defense of others. We are closing our file and will take no further action in this matter.